

LESSON 14

ISRA' AND MI'RAJ: JOURNEY TO AL-QUDS (JERUSALEM) AND ASCENSION TO HEAVEN

Twelfth Year of Prophethood

Allah had seen how Rasulullah (S) worked hard for Islam. He suffered much but he never complained. In fact, he always thanked Allah for the honor of serving Islam and doing Allah's will. Whenever he was not preaching or teaching his companions, he was saying his *Salat* and reciting the Quran. He also spent long hours at night saying *Salat*.

Now Allah decided to honor his last prophet by inviting him to visit Heaven and show Muhammad (S) His signs. Jibril (A) one night came to Rasulullah (S), woke him from his sleep and invited him to visit Heaven. He offered Rasulullah (S) a Buruq, a heavenly animal with wings, to serve as his ride. Jibril (A) took him first to Kabah. He opened Rasulullah's chest and washed his heart with the pure water of Zamzam. He then filled his heart with *Nur*, the divine light of faith and wisdom. Rasulullah (S) needed special preparation because he was going to be received by Allah. From Kabah, Jibril (A) and Rasulullah (S) went to the *Masjid al-Aqsa* in Al-Quds (Jerusalem). This *Masjid* was first built by Prophet Da'wud (A). It was completed by his son, Prophet Sulaiman (A). It had been destroyed by the Romans. Prophet Muhammad (S) prayed on the site of the *Masjid*.

This *Masjid* is the third holiest place of Islam. It also served as a direction of *Qiblah* for the Muslims in the early Islamic period. Khalifah Umar (R) built a *Masjid* at that site. The beautiful Dome of Rock was later built exactly on the site from where Rasulullah (S) ascended to heaven.

From the rock in the *Masjid*, Buraq took Rasulullah (S) to Heaven. In Paradise, Rasulullah (S) met all the prophets. Wherever he went, he was greeted very warmly. He saw both Paradise and Hell. Then he went to the highest Heaven, *Sidrat al Muntaha*, where no angels or human beings could go. This is the closest point to *Arsh*, the seat of Allah's power and majesty. Allah spoke to Muhammad (S) directly.

Through Rasulullah (S) Allah wanted the Muslim *Ummah* (Community) to be closer to him. So Allah made five daily *Salats* obligatory for all Muslims. *Salat* is described by Rasulullah (S) as *Miraj* (ascension) for the Muslims." In our *Salat* we stand face to face with Allah and speak to Him directly. Thanks to the gift of *Salat* the Muslims do not need priests to plead to Allah on their behalf.

Allah also honored Rasulullah (S) by giving him two more gifts. One of them was the last two verses of *Surah al-Baqarah*. The first verse deals with the faith of Muslims, and the second verse teaches a beautiful invocation to Allah for His help.

The second gift was the promise of Allah that the period of long suffering was about to end and a new era was about to begin.

After a visit to all the Heavens, *Buraq* brought Rasulullah (S) back to the *Masjid al-Aqsa*. All the prophets were waiting for him there. He led a prayer as their *Imam* (the leader). From the *Masjid al-Aqsa*, he returned home. All this travel took him a very short time. His bed was warm, and the chain on the door was still swinging. It was indeed a great miracle. In honoring His last prophet, Allah has honored us all and promised us His forgiveness.

The next morning, Rasulullah (S) told this story to all the Makkans. Those who believed in him knew that Allah who sends Jibril (A) with *Wahi* had indeed honored His prophet. The *Kuffar* thought of it as another *unbelievable* claim of Muhammad (S). They found in it another reason to make fun of the Prophet (S). The Muslims, however, told this story to each other and thanked Allah for His kindness to their Prophet (S) and to the entire Muslim *Ummah*.

Muslims in thankfulness to Allah ever since have maintained five daily *Salats*. *Salat* is the second *Rukn* (pillar) of Islam. It establishes closest relationship between us and our Creator and Lord.

Points of review:

1. Rasulullah's mission to Taif ended in failure.
2. Allah honored His prophet by inviting him to Heaven.
3. Allah honored Rasulullah's *Ummah* by the gift of five daily *Salat*.

Words to remember:

Imam, Mi'raj, Nur, Qiblah.

Important names:

Buraq, Zaid.

Quranic Study:

1. Read and memorise the last two verses of *Surah al-Baqarah* 2:285-286.
2. Read *Surah al-Isra'* (*Bani Isra'il*) 17:1. What is the purpose of Rasul Allah's night journeys described here?
3. *Surah al-Isra'* belongs to the last phase of Makkhan life. It has important message for the future course the Muslim *Ummah* was going to take in Madinah. Study some of these aspects of this *Surah*:
 - i. The Jews, because of their continuous disobedience have been dismissed from their role as chosen people. Acceptance of Islam can once again offer them a chance. (17:3-9)
 - ii. Kuffar are given final warning for the evil consequence of their disbelief. (17:16-18, 41)
 - iii. The moral foundation of Muslim polity (see Lesson 18 Quranic Study).

